

# HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 556

By Montgomery

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Wilma Maples of Gatlinburg.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Wilma Maples; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Maples was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Wilma Maples was born on Clinch River in Union County on May 25, 1923, one of eleven children born to Robert Eli "Dixie" Miller and Naomi Cook Miller; and

WHEREAS, uprooted by the Norris Lake project, the farm family moved to the Martel area of Loudon County, where Wilma graduated from Lenoir City High School; and

WHEREAS, after attending Knoxville Business College, she became one of the first female employees of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, serving in the headquarters before working at Oak Ridge and The Gatlinburg Inn; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Wilma received a surprise letter from the inn's owner, Rel Maples, proposing marriage; and

WHEREAS, they married in 1954, and she became an active partner in Rel's businesses, which included building the inn in 1937 before the national park opened and founding the town's first bank in the hotel lobby in 1950; and

WHEREAS, philanthropists of the highest order, Mr. and Mrs. Maples leased the land for the Sky Lift in Gatlinburg, extensively remodeled the inn, and developed the Hunter Hills Theater and the show, *Chucky and Jack*, about Governor John Sevier and the founding of Tennessee, then donated the theater to the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, after Rel's death in 1985, Wilma spent little time at the new home he had built for her on Cosby Road, but she occasionally hosted Gatlinburg Garden Club events at the home; and

WHEREAS, instead, she made her home at the inn, pouring the love and devotion she had happily shown Mr. Maples into maintaining the inn's character and distinction, exemplified by the rose garden she had planted to honor Rel's memory; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Maples became involved in preservation and conservation, including serving as the leading individual donor to the Friends of the Smokies, a group dedicated to protecting America's most-visited national park; and

WHEREAS, not long before her death, Wilma Maples gave the park a nearby 105-acre tract to prevent the land from being developed; and

WHEREAS, her main focus was on education, supporting libraries, and local schools; and

WHEREAS, at the Sevier County Campus of Walters State Community College, her philanthropy included the creation of the nationally accredited Rel Maples Institute of Culinary Arts; and

WHEREAS, her innumerable accomplishments aside, Mrs. Maples was also deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, she is survived by two sisters, Bonnie Miller and Naomi M. Barker; one brother, Glen A. Miller; and her beloved caregiver, Becky Creswell; and

WHEREAS, Wilma Maples leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Wilma Maples, reflecting fondly upon her

impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mrs. Maples.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.